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6
Lessons
Learned

HEADQUARTERS, 214TH COMBAT AVIATION BATTALION [U.S.]
APO San Francisco 96370

AD393391

AVGC-EE

SUBJECT:

9
Operational Report, [redacted]
30 Apr 1967.

quarterly
for period ending

THRU:

Commanding Officer
12th Combat Aviation Group
ATTN: AVGC-SC
APO 96491

*sent
5 Jun 67*

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OCT 31 1966
REGISTRY

TO:

Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development
Department of the Army
Washington, D. C. 20310

11 15 May 67

12 13 p.

1. References: AR 1-19, AR 220-346, AR 380-5, AR 870-5, and USARV Reg 1-19.

2. Attached are two copies of the Operational Report - Lessons Learned covering activities of the 214th Combat Aviation Battalion during the period 15 January 1967 thru 30 April 1967.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

1907-RD-670276

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Stanley O. Voight

STANLEY O. VOIGHT
1LT, Infantry
Asst Adjutant

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HEADQUARTERS
214th Combat Aviation Battalion
APO San Francisco 96370

15 May 1967

SUBJECT: Operational Report - Lesson Learned (RCS-CRFOR 67) for period ending 30 April 1967

SECTION I

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

A. Command.

1. This unit was organized by 1st Brigade GO 1914, dated 27 Dec 66, effective 15 Jan 1967. The mission was to provide command control, staff planning and administrative supervision for three to five helicopter companies and attached units as directed by Commanding Officer, 12th Combat Aviation Group. Personnel and equipment were provided from 12th Group resources. The authorized personnel strength was: 18 officers, 3 warrant officers and 88 enlisted men.

2. This newly organized aviation battalion began to form 10 Jan 1967. The first staff meeting was conducted at USARV headquarters 1430 hours 10 Jan 1967.

3. Members of the staff began to occupy a temporary battalion area on Camp Martin Cox, Bear Cat, Republic of Vietnam 13 Jan 1967. On 15 Jan 67 the commander arrived at Bear Cat. The members of the staff who were new arrivals in country or who had been assigned a job different than the one previously performed were sent out to work with their counterparts in other aviation battalions for a period determined by their proficiency.

4. The 222nd Aviation Battalion provided 15 men who served as the nucleus of our work force. These men contributed material toward development in the early stages at Bear Cat. As personnel were assigned, the men from the 222nd were returned to their unit.

5. The plan for the battalion area was finalized at a base camp development board meeting on 16 January 1967. This action consolidated the battalion area by making it one continuous block of real estate. The heliport was, upon this unit's recommendation, designed to run the full length of the camp. The 9th Division Aviation Officer was designated Airfield Commander.

6. The area allotted this unit was piled high with debris and spoils from other areas in the camp. A major engineer effort was required to prepare the heliport and the cantonment area. On 20 Jan 1967, the battalion borrowed a bulldozer from the 40th Signal Battalion to begin preparing the area. The battalion Maintenance Officer operated the bulldozer because of an acute shortage of qualified personnel.

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7. On 21 January 1967, the 15th Engineer Battalion began to provide the engineer effort by clearing the ground. Due to an increased commitment in the Delta the 15th Engineer Battalion was forced to abandon the job. Coordinating meetings were held at 12th Combat Aviation Group and at II Field Forces Victor to determine a source of necessary engineer support. Charlie Company, 169 Engineer Battalion was eventually assigned the project of building the heliport and companion facilities. Using personnel assigned to the Buffalo Battalion to augment their work force, the engineers started to pour concrete for the first 500 man mess hall floor 9 February.

8. On 13 February the battalion moved into its permanent area. This move is considered especially significant because the program for rapid growth was built on the concept that the maximum effort would be expended toward development of the area only after personnel were on the premises. The remainder of February saw the engineers, augmented by our self-help personnel, put in two 500 man mess halls, shower, and latrine facilities for headquarters and four companies, and continue to build the heliport. The personnel of headquarters company continued their self-help construction efforts by laying concrete foundations and building troop billets, building a battalion headquarters and a dispensary.

9. On 4 March the advanced party of the 200th Assault Support Helicopter Company arrived. Prior to their arrival, battalion headquarters personnel had erected tents for their use.

10. On 5 March the commander and staff presented a comprehensive briefing to the 200th after which they were processed. Arrangements were made for them to visit with other units for completion of their incountry orientation. Plans were immediately started toward their infusion program.

11. On 13 March the main body of the 200th Assault Support Helicopter Company began to arrive. The final party closed 17 March 67. Of particular significance is the fact that tentage had been erected and cots made available thereby making the transition as smooth and comfortable as possible.

12. The WABTOC and general cargo for the 200th arrived 10 March which enabled them to complete the building of their living area.

13. On 24 March, three of the 200th CH-47 helicopters arrived at Bear Cat. On 26 March the 16th and last of the 200th CH-47's closed. The 200th Assault Support Helicopter Company went operational 12 April 1967.

14. During April the 200th Assault Support Helicopter Company flew 552 hours carried 2,349 tons of cargo and 5,173 passengers.

15. The 214th Combat Aviation Battalion was formally organized at Fort Campbell Ky, on 4 Feb 67. Close coordination between Department of the Army and USAFV resulted in personnel assignments that complimented the personnel assigned to the provisional battalion in RVN or personnel possessing MOS's required in RVN. The latter personnel were used as carriers to transport the battalion equipment and colors to RVN. Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 214th Combat Aviation Battalion arrived in RVN on 21 April 1967.

16. A ceremony during which the colors of the 214th Combat Aviation Battalion were formally accepted by LTC James M. Leslie was held at Bear Cat

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2. April 1967 and the existence of the Buffalo Combat Aviation Battalion (Provisional) passed into history.

1. Personnel Morale and Discipline.

1. During February and early March morale in the battalion was extremely high. This can be contributed to several factors. The organization was formed from in-country assets, to a large degree and the vast majority of assigned personnel had already mentally and physically adjusted to Vietnam. The battalion was confronted with what no doubt appeared to many as an overwhelming task, that of building the facilities necessary to operate, house and feed a Combat Aviation Battalion. As work continued and visible evidence of progress was observed, the momentum increased and a spirit of team work and cooperation prevailed. An unusually high degree of personal interest in the welfare of the enlisted men was displayed by the commander, officers, and NCO's. The troops were kept informed and briefed regularly on construction progress, goals and combat operations. Enlisted personnel were provided the small degree of creature comforts and entertainment available almost immediately. These things were recognized, appreciated and rewarded by even greater productivity. Disciplinary problems during this period were practically non-existent.

2. Intelligence and Counterintelligence.

1. General:

a. The S-2 Section has devoted its energy toward the construction of facilities and organizing the section. Initially, a field site provided the only means of securing classified materials. During this period, desks, safes and TOL equipment needed to function arrived.

b. On 4 March the S-2 gave the initial security orientation to the advanced party of the 200th ASHC. This was followed on 19 March with the security orientation and intelligence briefing for the main body. During this period the section performed a local files check on every member of the 200th ASHC, validated required clearances and took other personnel security actions.

2. Security:

a. During the organizing of a new battalion, the S-2 established necessary policies, procedures and files to organize the section. Simultaneously the intelligence section conducted personnel security actions and orientations, performed distribution and storage of classified material and implemented regulations and directives from higher headquarters.

b. The classified files and distribution facility operated by the intelligence section processed approximately 319 incoming and 87 outgoing pieces of classified material during the quarter. Five SACRA documents were destroyed.

c. The battalion experienced no security violations requiring investigation under provision of paragraph 72, AR 380-5, during this reporting period. This headquarters received no administrative violations during this period.

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3. Escape and Evasion:

a. This unit fully implemented the 1st Aviation Brigade and 12th Aviation Group Escape and Evasion programs. On 26 March 1967, the S-2 attended the PACAF Jungle Survival School. On 7 April 1967, a two hour class was presented to the 200th ASHC on Escape, Evasion and Jungle Survival. This class was tailored to their mission and area of operation.

4. Staff Visits:

a. This headquarters received staff visits from the S-2 of the 1st Aviation Brigade and the 12th Combat Aviation Group. Both of these visits proved beneficial and complementary.

b. Regularly scheduled liaison visits were made weekly to USAFV Headquarters by a representative of the intelligence section, with visits to 1st Aviation Brigade and 12th Group as required.

5. Plans, Operations, and Training.

1. The operations section was formed and began training 15 Jan 1967. Assigned personnel had limited experience in Battalion S-3 operations. A training program was developed which relied heavily on the other aviation battalions for empirical data. Key personnel were sent TDI to observe other units operate. The absence of TO&E equipment and the authority to requisition, made organization and training more difficult. A high degree of operational readiness was obtained in late February with the main limiting factor being communications equipment.

2. Liaison was established with the 9th Infantry Division. The main objective was to assist the division in the employment of aviation. Units in the division were very receptive to suggestions and recommendations. Classes were conducted at battalion and brigade levels on airmobile operations.

3. The 200th ASHC closed at Bear Cat 17 March 67. Assigned pilots were sent TDI to other ASHC for orientation and training. On 12 April 1967 the first operational missions were conducted.

6. Logistics.

1. During January the S-4 Section came into being. The battalion was "Provisional" and all equipment that was obtained during the month was by temporary hand receipt. Mission essential items plus limited quantities of installation property were obtained during the month. Highlight of the month was increasing from zero wheel vehicles to three $\frac{1}{2}$ ton trucks, one $\frac{3}{4}$ ton truck and an obsolete M-211 $2\frac{1}{2}$ ton truck. Second most significant accomplishment was hand receipting two 10KW generators.

2. February was a growing month for the logistics section. Personnel wise, the section gained a supply sergeant, a warrant officer supply technician and a clerk. For a brief time the section also had an assistant S-4. Equipment wise, the section obtained three $\frac{1}{2}$ ton trucks on hand receipt. 200 folding cots

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and 74 general purpose tents were acquired. Highlight of the month was obtaining two 65 cubic foot refrigerators for the TO&E messhall.

3. During March the 200th Assault Support Helicopter Company and equipment arrived. The major S-4 activity during the month was coordinating the transportation requirements for the unit from the arrival port to Bear Cat. By the end of the month 95% of the 200th's TO&E was on hand.

4. April was a productive month for the S-4 section. Arrangements for garrison type messhall equipment were completed and over 75% of the equipment for two 500 man messhalls arrived. The Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 214th Combat Aviation Battalion TO&E advanced equipment also arrived.

F. Information: - Not used.

G. Signal.

1. The first elements of the battalion communications section arrived on the 15th of January and by the evening of the 16th had established telephone communications back to the 12th Combat Aviation Group.

2. Radio communication was established with the 12th Combat Aviation Group on 3 February 67. The battalion command net was established on 10 April 67 with the arrival of the 200th ASHC.

3. On 7 February the teletype circuit to 12th Group was terminated in the battalion area and off-line traffic commenced.

4. On-line Crypto capability was acquired on 4 April and the battalion communication center then became fully operational.

H. Surgeon.

1. Due to the nonavailability of a flight surgeon in the initial stages of organization, the assigned medical technicians worked in the 9th Infantry Division clearing station. The clearing station handled sick call and gave medical support to this unit.

2. In February 1967 the medical support was transferred to the 9th Aviation Battalion dispensary.

3. The flight surgeon arrived 21 April and the battalion dispensary became fully operational on 30 April 1967.

4. Of particular note is the fine work in the preventative medicine area. The latrines and urinals are maintained in a high state of sanitation, water is not allowed to stagnate in the battalion area, the mess halls have been areas of close scrutiny, and mosquito nets and malaria pills have been given special attention in medical and command channels. These factors probably contribute to the freedom from contagious diseases enjoyed by this organization.

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SECTION II, PART I

LESSONS LEARNED

A. Personnel.

1. **Item.** Infusion program for aviators in newly arrived aviation companies.

Discussion. An infusion program is necessary to provide immediate in-country experience, special qualifications such as instructor pilot, and to provide a complete turnover of personnel in an unacceptable short period of time. It is desirable to accomplish at least 20% of the officer infusion immediately upon arrival. This immediate action serves to minimize multiple moves and personal inconvenience, expedite local check outs, increase availability for combat missions, and provides the new unit with aviators who have recent combat experience.

Observations. When officers are transferred immediately upon arrival the following problems arise:

- a. Because of the distances usually involved, excessive time is consumed and many trips required to complete efficiency reports.
- b. LL records may not be readily available to the gaining unit.
- c. Turnin of organizational equipment and joint inventory of property is not properly accomplished prior to departure. One to three days after arrival should be allowed, depending on the individuals responsibilities, before actually departing the unit.

2. **Item.** In processing procedures for incoming units of company size.

Discussion. An effective and efficient in-processing plan was innovated. Prior to arrival of the company from CONUS, an itinerary was prepared to determine the number of clerks and supervisory personnel needed for the project. Individuals to be processed were separated into officer and enlisted groups to better use the personnel section. The time and place of processing was then easily determined. The itinerary was given to the company commander upon his arrival.

Observation. The inprocessing of company size units can be expeditiously accomplished when properly planned. It was learned that processing in small groups of ten were the most advantageous because the unit commander could continue his work and the number of clerks required was kept to a minimum. This greatly enhanced effective utilization of man hours, expedited the processing, and abolished standing lines.

B. Operations.

1. **Item.** Marking of landing zones.

Discussion. The marking of a landing zone on a combat assault is a critical phase of the operation. A fire team leader on a pre-strike, recon and marking of landing zone, many times encounters difficulty in determining the desirable touch down point of the lead aircraft. There have been several

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incidents when the smoke was not in the proper area. A fire team at low level or recon will, have difficulty remaining oriented particularly in the delta area where all rice dikes look alike and canals, creeks and rivers can not be distinguished except from higher altitudes. As a rule the landing zone is not marked by a fire team until the lift units are on final approach. If the mark is not in the proper place generally the first to realize the mistake is the aviation and ground units commanders who are in Command and Control Aircraft.

At this point there is a noteworthy increase in radio traffic and the lift unit is put in a vulnerable position at a low altitude.

Observation. To insure the proper landing zone is marked a fire team can mark with smoke as soon as they arrive to recon the area. The commanders can then confirm the mark and if incorrect the fire team can be notified. When the lift unit is on final the point can be marked again or relocated as directed by the commanders. This procedure will permit the aviation commander, ground commander, and fire team leader to correct any misunderstanding of the landing zone location prior to the lift unit becoming vulnerable to ground fire.

C Training and Organization.

1. Item. Assistance to new ground units in country.

Discussion. As a rule most units receive considerable training in air mobile operations prior to arrival in Vietnam. The techniques of aviation units in Vietnam may vary with each company size unit. This sometimes confuses ground units as well as aviation units. Also ground units vary with the type of operation preferred by the commander i.e.; eagle flights vs battalion lifts, daylight vs night operations. A ground unit may conduct several airmobile operations and not work with the same aviation unit more than once. New units in country are generally receptive to suggestions and changes to methods of operations. Any suggestions however, must be made known to the unit with reasonable explanation. A statement that a unit is "fouled up" without specific details is of no value.

Observation. Established aviation units may be premature in judging a newly arrived ground unit in the first few weeks of airmobile operation. Specific instances of unsatisfactory performance should be brought to the attention of aviation liaison officers who can most effectively recommend corrective action.

D Intelligence.

1. Item. Unit processing.

Discussion. The 200th ASHC was the first unit to join the battalion. It was required that individuals receive a security briefing, USARV Form 150R be completed, and security clearances be validated. The security briefing was held with the unit as a group. To insure that the 150R would be completed and validation of security clearances accomplished the S-2 set up a station as part of the personnel inprocessing. As a result of the time involved in completing the required reading section of USARV Reg 150R, this requirement was dropped and

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only clearance validation and local files checks continued. This resulted in approximately 247 local files checks and only 26 clearances validated or action initiated for validation at higher headquarters.

Observation. To preclude unnecessary delay and work, the security orientation portion of USARV Form 150R should be accomplished in conjunction with the initial orientation. The individual should indicate his last degree of security clearance on this form. The unit commander should then indicate what additional personnel security clearance action he desires. This will eliminate unnecessary files checks and provide an immediate roster of personnel and their security clearance.

D. Logistics.

1. Item. Equipment for a provisional organization.

Discussion. The activating order for the Buffalo Combat Aviation Battalion did not confer authority to requisition equipment. The equipment used was provided from the resources of 12th Combat Aviation Group. Many mission essential items were in short supply in the 12th Group and were not available for hand receipt or lateral transfer to this unit. At the close of this reporting period, the TO&E equipment for the 214th Combat Aviation Battalion had still not arrived in Vietnam.

Observation. To preclude recurrence of a unit having to operate with a shortage of mission essential items a provisional organization should be authorized to requisition mission essential TO&E equipment such as, vehicles and radios, in the early stages of organization.

F. Signal.

1. Item. Base camp electrical power requirements.

Discussion. TO&E Units do not have adequate generators assigned to accommodate the normal conveniences that American troops are allowed to acquire for use in base camp. Assigned field lighting sets are uneconomical as substitute power lines. If electrical wires are allowed to lay on the ground they become a safety hazard during the monsoon season and if strung between tents they are of such odd length that the area becomes cluttered with wire. TO&E Units are not normally assigned an electrician and in many cases untrained people are required to install and maintain an electrical complex comparable to a small city.

Observation. Provisional units which are not supported by R&U post type electrical support should be authorized to requisition generators of adequate capacity and sufficient equipment such as poles, wire and insulators, to establish a safe and efficient electrical system within the cantonment area of the base camp.

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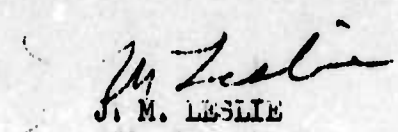
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SECTION II, PART II

RECOMMENDATIONS

When a unit is organized provisionally maximum consideration should be given to granting requisitioning authority.


J. M. LESLIE
LTC, Infantry
Commanding

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AVGC-SC (7 Feb 67) 1st Ind (U)
 SUBJECT: Operational Report - Lessons Learned (ORLL) for Period Ending
 30 April 1967 (RCS CSFOR-65)

HEADQUARTERS, 12TH COMBAT AVIATION GROUP, APO 96491

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff Force Development
 Department of the Army
 Washington, D.C. 20301

1. Two copies of the 214th Combat Aviation Battalion's Operational Report - Lessons Learned (ORLL) (RCS CSFOR-65) for period ending 30 April 1967, is forwarded in compliance with USARV Regulation 1-19, dated 8 February 1967.

2. Comments are included on observation and recommendation made by the battalion commander.

a. Personnel: None

b. Operations: Reference Item I, page 6. The procedure of marking a landing area while on reconnaissance gives away the intentions of the assaulting force. The practice of reconnoitering prospective landing zones is essential to the success of the airmobile operation. However, consideration should be given to reconnaissance only to the extent necessary to familiarize commanders and key planners with the proposed operational area. The flight leader and gun team leader should be aboard the reconnaissance helicopter to enable coordination to be effected for the coming operation. It is at this time that the exact touchdown point should be agreed upon. In most cases this agreement during the reconnaissance precludes the requirement for a "mark" during the assault. This method greatly reduces radio transmission and the possibility of a mistake if the smoke does not "take". The effectiveness of this method is "battle tested" and is highly recommended to prevent compromising the operational area.

c. Training and Organization: Reference Item 1 page 7. When a new ground unit arrives in-country the commander of that unit is visited by the aviation commander who will habitually give the aviation support. SOP's are exchanged and must include the battalion airmobile SOP and the 1st Aviation Brigade Handbook. In this manner each commander gets a working knowledge of the other. Once the operation is begun the aviation liaison officer must be used to the maximum to effect coordination and promote harmony with the ground commander.

d. Intelligence: None

e. Logistics: None

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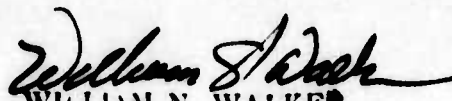
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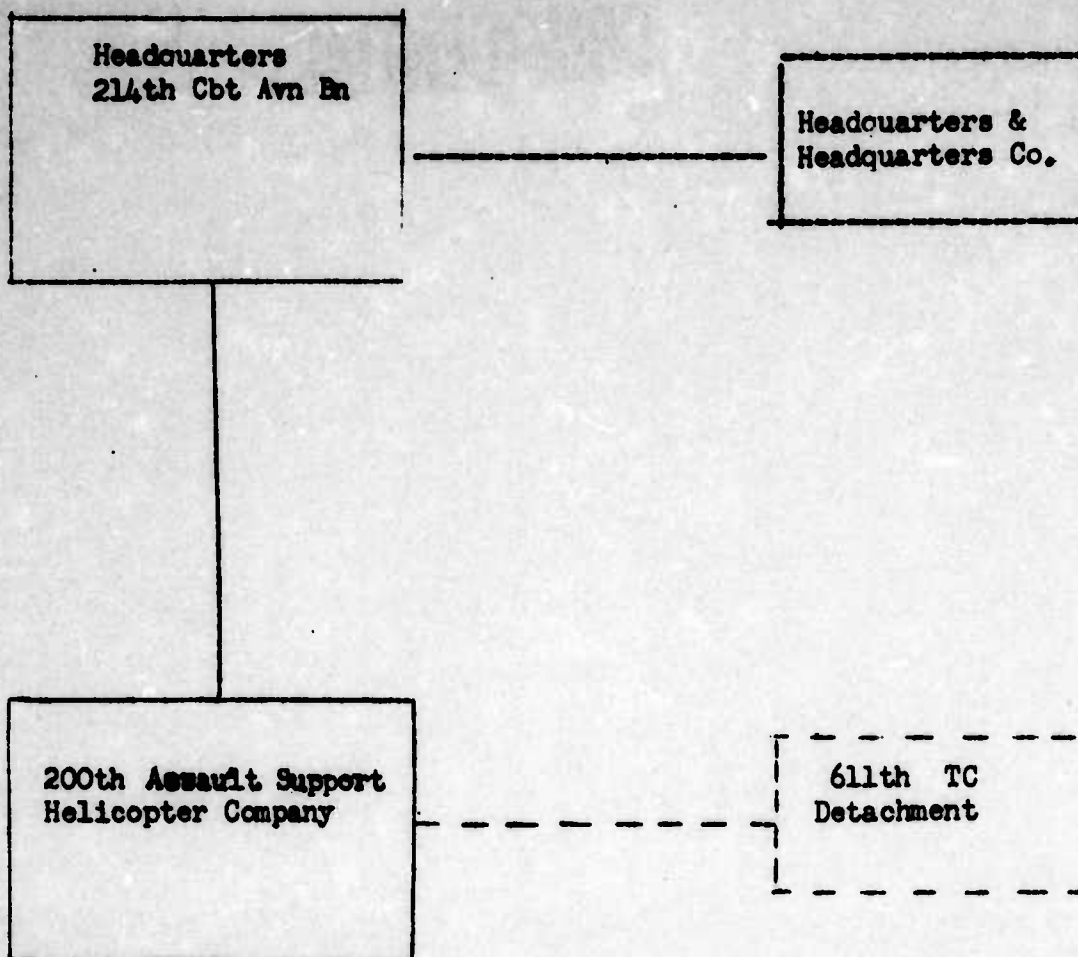
SUBJECT: Operational Report - Lessons Learned (ORLL) for Period Ending
30 April 1967 (RCS CSFOR-65)

FOR THE COMMANDER:

1 Incl
as


WILLIAM N. WALKER
CPT, INF
Asst Adjutant

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